



# California Veterans Board

*Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor*



Feb/Apr 2008

## NEWSLETTER

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### CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD MEMBERS

*Alice Astafan  
Chairman*

*Tom Moran  
Vice Chairman*

*Jake Alarid  
Member*

*Vernon Chong  
Member*

*Thomas Richards  
Member*

*Edward Olson  
Member*



*Undersecretary Roger Brautigan administers the Oath of Office to two New Board Members (from left to right) Undersecretary Roger Brautigan, Edward Olson and Thomas Richards*

### NEW BOARD MEMBERS APPOINTED

With the departure of Board Members Randal Bressette and Colin Shadell, Governor Schwarzenegger appointed two new Members to fill the vacancies, Edward Olson of the Yountville Veterans Home, and Thomas (Tom) Richards of San Diego.

Tom Richards is the executive director of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot Museum Historical Society at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego and also has a small, part-time business and Internet consulting company in San Diego. After serving for nearly twenty-eight years in the Marine Corps, and rising from private to lieutenant colonel, Tom and his wife, Diane, a human resources professional, settled in San Diego. Tom holds masters degrees in history and business administration from San Diego State University and volunteers extensively in the community. His volunteer

assignments include: National Commander of the Legion of Valor, State Commander of the Legion of Valor; Chairman, San Diego County Veterans Council; member, Board of Directors, Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in San Diego, member/community service chair, Board of Directors, Rotary Club of Rancho Bernardo, member, Board of Directors, Rancho Bernardo Rotary Foundation, President, Spirit of the Fourth, Inc., and mentor for the San Diego Student Services Organization.

Edward Olson has been a resident of the Yountville Veterans Home since 2006. From 1986 to 2005, Olson was self-employed in real estate, building contracting and home inspection. From 1968 to 1985, he was chief engineer for Information Magnetics Corporation and from 1968 to 1969 was senior engineer for Applied Magnetics Corporation. Prior to that, Olson was chief engineer for General Instrument Corporation from 1958 to 1968 and engineer for Northern American Aviation from 1955 to 1957. He is currently Vice Chair of the Allied Council at the Yountville Veterans Home.



## **BOARD ELECTS NEW CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

At the end of Dr. Vernon Chong's term as Chair, the Board voted to elect Alice Astafan as the new Chair and Tom Moran as Vice Chair. At a recent meeting, the Board voted to limit the term of office for Chair to two years.



## **HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FEBRUARY 2008 CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD MEETING AT THE BARSTOW VETERANS HOME**

- John King, Deputy Secretary for Veterans Services gave an update on federal and state efforts to address the growing number of mental health issues suffered by Veterans.
- Undersecretary Roger Brautigan gave an update on the opening of the three new Southern California Veterans Homes. Construction is expected to be completed by December 2008 for Lancaster and Ventura and official opening is anticipated in April 2009. Completed construction on the West Los Angeles veterans home is anticipated in December 2009 with a grand opening in April 2010. There are currently more than 300 veterans who have submitted notices of interest to apply for admission to the Lancaster, West Los Angeles, and Ventura veterans homes.
- Stan Oppegard, Deputy Secretary for Veterans Homes announced that a wireless Internet program is being installed at the Barstow and Chula Vista veterans homes and installation will soon follow for the

home in Yountville.

- Rusty Rustan, Operation Firing for Effect, updated the Board on efforts to place the Veterans Mandatory Healthcare Funding initiative on the ballot and requested volunteers to solicit signatures for the petition.
- A new task force on Veterans Home Eligibility/GLAVC has been created by the Department, and Board Member Jake Alarid has been asked to be a member of this task force.
- The Board voted to approve a new policy [\(A-15\)](#) covering the handling of complaints received by the Board.
- Resolutions were prepared for outgoing Board Members Randy Bressette and Colin Shadell, but due to their inability to attend, they will be presented at a future Board Meeting.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE APRIL CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD MEETING IN SACRAMENTO AT THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

*In response to the Governor's request to cut expenses, the Board held its April 2008 meeting in Sacramento, rather than in Bakersfield as planned. By meeting in Sacramento, the two new board members were able to complete their department orientation in conjunction with the board meeting, thus saving travel dollars.*



- Brandon Blackburn, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Representative, explained the claims process for Northern California.
- Tom Splitgerber, President, County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), described the duties and responsibilities of the CVSOs.
- Chair Alice Astafan reviewed the committees and assignments for the new members. Tom Richards will Chair the Legislative Committee and be a member of the Veterans Services Committee, and Ed Olson will Chair the Homes Committee and be a member of the Communications Committee.
- During 2006-07, the Board issued 11 Resolutions: 8 to past Board Members, 1 for the anniversary of the Yountville Veterans Home, 1 to support enacting legislation for the G.I. Bill, which is pending, and

1 to support legislation for Mandatory Healthcare Funding, which is also pending.

- Anthony Allman, Vice President of Student Veterans of America, requested the Board's support of SB 1219 (Cedillo) Armed Forces Cal Grants. The Board voted unanimously to send a letter supporting the legislation to Senator Cedillo.
- The issue of applicants with a criminal history was raised by a letter from a resident at the Chula Vista veterans home, requesting a review of the Admissions Policy. The Board referred this item to the Policy and Procedures Committee for review to be reported on at the next meeting.
- J.P. Tremblay, Deputy Secretary for External Affairs, presented the recently produced Veterans Affairs Public Service Announcements for the Board and distributed copies to each.
- The Board briefly reviewed its Policy Book and noted several reports that the Executive Officer will file for compliance with the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA).



## BOARD MEMBERS OUT AND ABOUT

Board Chair Alice Astafan represented the CDVA at an Awards Selection for Troops to Teachers in Sacramento on March 5.

Board member Dr. Vernon Chong attended the CDVA Vet Fund Meeting in Sacramento on March 28.

**WHAT IS A VETERAN?** A Veteran –whether Active Duty, Retired, National Guard or Reserve is someone who, at one point in his or her life, wrote a blank check made payable to “The United States of America”, for an amount of “up to and including my life.” *Author Unknown.*



The next meeting will be held on June 13 at the Chula Vista Veterans Home. These meetings are open to the public. Plan to attend and meet the Board and key members of the CDVA.



***MISSION STATEMENT: The California Veterans Board serves as an***

*advocate for Veterans affairs identifying needs and working to ensure and enhance the rights and benefits of California veterans and their dependents.*

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Note to editors: This California Veterans Board Newsletter and previous CalVet Board informational documents are available on the Board's website at [www.cdva.ca.gov/board](http://www.cdva.ca.gov/board) and via e-mail from [CalVetBoard@cdva.ca.gov](mailto:CalVetBoard@cdva.ca.gov).